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ABSTRACT

In early 1942, the "Pittsburgh Courier," the largest black newspaper in the United States, began its Double V campaign stressing the right of black workers to have equality at home when blacks were fighting inequality abroad. An examination of the campaign, however, reveals that it was dead by the end of the year, while substantial gains by black workers did not occur until a year or so later. To discover why the newspaper dropped its campaign before it accomplished its goals, an examination was made of its coverage of black worker issues in 1942. The analysis showed that there was a definite shift in the nature of the articles over the year. In the first half of 1942, the federal government and the military were criticized heavily, but the state and municipal governments and private businesses became targets of criticisms in the second half of the year. This allayed fears of the Federal Bureau of Investigation that the "Courier" was possibly seditious, it left no doubt that the publisher of the paper was supporting the winning side as the war fortunes of the United States changed, and it showed the paper's appreciation for the efforts of the Fair Employment Practice Committee to break down discrimination. (FL)

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THE PITTSBURGH COURIER AND BLACK WORKERS IN 1942

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THE PITTSBURGH COURIER AND BLACK WORKERS IN 1942

By PAT WASHBURN

ABSTRACT

During World War II, black workers in the United States made significant gains, which were trumpeted by black newspapers. The leader in the drive for black rights was the Pittsburgh Courier, the country's largest black newspaper. In early 1942, it began its famous Double V campaign, which stressed the right of blacks to have equality in the U.S. when they were fighting inequality abroad. Thus, the war must bring victory abroad and victory at home.

In a study of the Double V, I found that the campaign virtually was dead in the Courier by the end of the year. Most of the substantial gains by black workers during the war, however, did not occur until 1943 and 1944. That results in the question of why the Courier dropped its campaign before it accomplished its objective.

This paper examines the newspaper's coverage of black workers in 1942, what trends were present in the material and whether these trends corresponded with the shift in emphasis in the Double V. The paper shows that there was a definite change in the articles about black workers. In the first half of the year, the federal government and the military were criticized heavily, but the state and municipal government and private businesses became the target of criticism in the latter part of 1942. This allayed FBI fears that the Courier was possibly seditious; it left no doubt that the black publisher of the newspaper was supporting the winning side as the U.S.'s war fortunes changed; and it showed the paper's appreciation for the efforts of the Fair Employment Practice Committee to break down discrimination. Furthermore, it was an attempt to improve black morale.

In its final issue of 1942, the Pittsburgh Courier, the country largest black newspaper with a national circulation of over 200,000, noted in an editorial that "there is still much discrimination against Negroes in industry, despite the protests of colored people and the hearings of the Fair Employment Practices Committee. As the need for more and more skilled labor grows--with the increasing tempo of the war--the barriers that remain will be lowered and may soon disappear."[1] The Courier's look into the future was only partially correct. Few barriers confronting black workers disappeared entirely during World War II, but blacks did make significant employment gains. Robert C. Weaver, who rose to become head of the black labor division of the War Manpower Commission (WMC) during the war, noted in 1946 that blacks experienced more occupational improvements between 1940 and 1944 than in the previous 75 years.[2]

These gains of black workers--as well as the numerous instances of job discrimination--were trumpeted by black newspapers throughout the war. Although only one of the 155 black papers was published daily (the Atlanta Daily World), they were a powerful influence on the country's almost 13 million blacks. Their combined weekly circulation rose from 1,276,000 in 1940, when over one-third of the nation's black families took a black newspaper, to 1,809,000 in 1945. Researchers have estimated that between 3½ million and 6 million blacks read the newspapers each week with large Northern black papers, such as the Courier, being read the most frequently.[3]

The Courier was the leader in the drive for black rights by the press since it initiated and spearheaded the war's most famous black newspaper campaign: the Double V. Begun in February 1942, the campaign

stressed that blacks should have the same rights as whites in America if they were going to risk their lives overseas fighting totalitarian forces. Thus, the war had to result in both victory abroad and victory at home. The Courier was seeking non-discrimination and equal pay for black civilian workers and an opening up of the armed services to blacks. When the war began, black men could not join the marines or coast guard; there were no black air corps pilots; the navy would accept them only as messboys; and the army confined them to four units. Openings in the latter seldom occurred. Such discrimination angered blacks; since they virtually could not participate in the country's defense, they felt like second-class citizens. The Courier constantly remainded readers that its Double V campaign was at the forefront of a struggle for status.[4]

In a recent study of the Courier, I found that the Double V campaign peaked in April and May of 1942 and was almost dead by the end of the year, although the campaign's themes, seldom referred to as the Double V, lingered on in the paper throughout the war. Frank E. Bolden, who wrote some of the Double V articles and is the only surviving news columnist or news editor from the Courier's 1942 staff, attributed the decline in emphasis on the Double V in 1942 to black employment gains. Among the most noteworthy were: Black men were accepted for the marines and coast guard and they became air corps pilots; their status was upgraded in the army and navy and by November they were fighting in the South Pacific and North Africa; black women were accepted for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC); and both black men and women got more and better jobs in defense plants, not only because of government pressure on employers but because of a military drain on available white workers. "These gains showed good faith intentions by the government and other

people (those who owned war plants), and we (the Courier's staff) felt we should follow suit," said Bolden.[5]

Most of the gains by black workers during the war, however, occurred in 1943 and 1944, according to a Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) report in May 1945 on non-white workers (blacks made up 96 percent of this group). The Committee noted that less than 3 percent of the workers in firms reporting to the War Manpower Commission in early 1942 were non-white compared to 8.3 percent by November 1944. Industries in which large numbers of non-whites at least doubled between September 1942 and November 1944 included: manufacturing, 436,900 to 873,700 (100 percent increase); shipbuilding, 62,600 to 177,500 (184 percent); government, 24,100 to 131,000 (444 percent); aircraft production, 38,000 to 109,900 (189 percent); ordnance and accessories, 41,200 to 102,200 (148 percent); and food and kindred products, 25,600 to 55,700 (118 percent).[6] Historian Neil Wynn notes that an equally important statistic was a decrease in the number of unemployed blacks from 640,000 in 1942 to 151,000 in 1944.[7]

The same pattern was evident in the navy. Blacks in that branch of the armed services increased from 5,026 in mid-1942 to 165,000 in September 1945.[8] Black gains in the army were not as impressive because that branch already had 99,206 blacks at the end of 1941. In a year, the number had grown to 399,454 and there were 694,818 on June 30, 1945.[9]

Therefore, the Courier's Double V campaign, which primarily emphasized equal rights for black workers, was virtually dead before blacks began making substantial job-related gains in World War II. That results in several questions:

Although the Double V appeared frequently in the Courier in 1942

(I found in my study that as much as 13 percent of the available editorial space was allotted to articles, photographs and drawings that mentioned it), there was far more non-Double V material on workers. What were the major trends in all worker-related stories in the Courier in 1942, and why did they occur?

Did some of the trends correspond with the shift in emphasis in the Double V?

Do the trends suggest a need to revise Bolden's explanation for why the Double V ended? If so, what is a more plausible explanation?

To answer these questions, I read all worker-related material in each of the 52 issues of the Courier in 1942.

* * * * *

The Pittsburgh Courier was not the first black paper to try to help black workers in a time of burgeoning jobs. During the 1910s and 1920s, when blacks streamed north in the great migration, black papers such as the New York News, New York Age and Chicago Defender assisted workers by easing relocation problems. The Defender particularly became famous for not only printing letters describing the North's advantages, but for running job advertisements, giving train schedules and ticket prices, and writing articles on where black migrants could find housing and on how they should act in an urban situation. One historian summed up the Defender's aid to migrants by saying the paper "provided a very good substitute for the knowledge which comes through travel."[10]

In 1942, the Courier did two of the same things as the Defender more than 20 years before--it ran numerous stories about job openings and it advised workers how to act and dress on the job. In noting a

wide variety of employment opportunities for both men and women, the Courier did not confine itself to the Pittsburgh area. News stories pointed out defense plant openings for women in Omaha, Nebraska; doctors' positions at the army's Ft. Huachuca in Arizona; shipbuilding jobs in New Orleans, Louisiana; nursing employment in New York City; and harvesting positions in Florida.[11] In fact, there were so many job openings in some fields--particularly for stenographers in Washington--that it was impossible to fill them with blacks or whites. The Courier noted that this embarrassed black leaders who had been complaining about a lack of jobs for blacks. Whether it also embarrassed any white leaders, particularly Southern Congressmen who attempted to fill all but the most menial Washington job openings with whites, was not noted.[12]

A controversy resulted over one of the job openings. In May, the Courier announced that Sun Shipbuilding Co. in Chester, Pennsylvania, was going to build a separate plant that would hire only blacks (between 5,000 and 6,000). The paper emphasized that this would end black unemployment in Chester and would provide some jobs for blacks who lived in nearby Philadelphia.[13] In a subsequent issue in June, the Courier devoted almost a full page to the project, even including nine photographs, and the number of workers, who would have an annual payroll of $21 million, was increased to 9,000.[14] The paper also noted that 69-year-old Emmett J. Scott, a Courier columnist and one of the country's most well-known blacks, would be the yard's personnel director.[15]

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), black government officials and the top educators at Tuskegee Institute attacked not only Sun's obvious segregation plan but the Courier for supporting it. The paper noted that those groups called

Sun's plan a step backward, despite the large number of blacks who would be hired, because it would make it easier to fire the blacks at the end of the war by closing down the plant than if blacks worked in an integrated yard.[16] On the Courier, only influential columnist George S. Schuyler criticized the segregated yard, and he indirectly attacked the Courier when he claimed that "even the most stupid Aframerican can see the disadvantages" of such a plan. "It must never be forgotten that segregation is only a palliative, not a solution," wrote Schuyler. "It invariably worsens race relations and makes the subordination of Negroes to white whims and prejudices more permanent."[17] The Courier also printed a letter from a reader who wondered if the paper was playing up the Sun story just to increase circulation.[18] The Courier never backed down, however, from its support of the Sun yard. In an August article, the paper argued:

> Whenever a Negro or a group of Negroes can go into a project . . . gain administrative and executive experience, learn the art of shipbuilding and manufacturing on a large mass production scale, it should be welcomed by ALL groups. . . . It means that we are moving a little further up the ladder of practical experience in business training and are making some financial gains, too.
>
> Regardless of what is said to the contrary, we will only succeed by letting this white world KNOW that we have the ability, the training and the experience. The Sun project is a magnificent laboratory, if nothing more to get that training, experience and financial compesation. 19

The Courier was equally forceful in advising black workers in a fatherly manner on how to act and dress on the job, and one word--"opportunity"--appeared frequently. "Opportunity is knocking at our door," wrote Joseph D. Bibb, another of the paper's nationally-known columnists, in January. He said that if blacks worked "studiously and assiduously" they would get "permanent footholds" in new and better types of jobs.[20]

But even Bibb admitted that it was simplistic to believe that mere hard work alone would get blacks ahead. Throughout the war, the Courier cautioned workers that they also must avoid being belligerent, rude, careless and bumptious. Equally harmful was uncleanliness.

> We want no more grimy, filthy defense workers of our race riding on public conveyances and parading around in stifling, smelly work apparel. We want them to wash up and clean up after the day's work is done. . . . If we desire to break down racial antagonisms and override prejudices, we must do our best in removing as many barriers as possible.
>
> During the World War I many of us were reluctantly assigned to work in high explosive plants, mostly with TNT. We came out of the yards looking like men from Mars. Our shoes were coated with green powders, our eyelids were dusted with queer powders, our skins were coated with all the colors of the rainbow, and our finger nails had turned yellow, but notwithstanding, we only marched off of our jobs and crowded onto the street cars as passengers shrunk away from us with disdain and disgust.
>
> Many pleas were made for Jim Crow cars, but we loudly guffawed and boisterously went our merry way. Prejudice mounted against us in northern cities, and after the war, when the war-time industries closed down, many northerners sought to find plans to have us removed to the south again. . . . We want no repetition of this. 21

In stressing actions and cleanliness, the Courier noted that blacks must not think of themselves alone--it was the progress of all blacks that mattered. If one black worker made a poor impression, it could result in other blacks not getting jobs. Columnist Edgar T. Rouzeau said this was being "a traitor to the racial cause."[22]

The Courier constantly stressed, however, that good manners were meaningless if blacks were denied jobs or were given only menial positions with little or no chance for advancement. There was no question that such discrimination was nationwide as the Courier noted hundreds of instances in 1942: only one black professor on the faculties of the New York City colleges; no blacks except janitors at a Caterpillar plant in Peoria, Ill.; whites imported from the south to work in ALCOA

plants in Connecticut rather than hiring unemployed blacks living nearby; only whites hired as Red Cross social workers in Chicago; advertisements for guards at an Oakland plant restricted applicants to whites; only whites accepted as officers on Liberty ships; and black beer truck drivers fired in New Orleans for not belonging to a union that refused them membership.[23]

There also were letters from readers describing specific acts of discrimination. A typical letter was the following from an unidentified writer in Henderson, Texas:

> We have a branch of the United States Employment Agency. White people sign up and get good jobs, but when Negroes sign up they are forced to take a job in a private family for as low as $2 a week, and when they don't take it they are told that they will never get another job and they force us to take it. 24

Such letters did not appear often, but the few that were used did not include one of the common themes found in letters in the Chicago Defender during the great migration of the 1910s and 1920s: Come north because of the wonderful job opportunities. Even if the Courier did get such letters, they would have been unnecessary because of the constant news stories the paper ran on job openings, which were scattered throughout the country rather than in one section.

The Courier made one discriminatory barrier a cause celebre. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, a black messboy, Dorie Miller, carried his wounded captain to safety and then fired a machine gun at enemy airplanes until he ran out of ammunition. On Jan. 3, the Courier revealed the incident and blasted the navy for limiting blacks to service as messboys. "Is it fair, honest or sensible that this country, with its fate in the balance, should continue to bar Negroes from service except in the mess department of the Navy, when at the first sign of danger they

so dramatically show their willingness to face death in defense of the Stars and Stripes?" the Courier asked.[25]

Throughout the remainder of that winter and the spring, the Courier pressed for Miller to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. That was denied, but he did receive the Navy Cross, his service's highest award, in May.[26] The Courier wasn't placated. One week after Miller received the Cross, Schuyler asked in his front-page column why it took five months for him to get a medal and why he wasn't brought back to America, like some of the white heroes at Pearl Harbor, to boost morale and help War Bond sales. "But no, the spirit of jim crow still rules in high places," said Schuyler. "It must be comforting to Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese."[27] In late July, the Courier still was seeking the return of Miller with antagonistic words: "The Navy finds Dorie Miller too important waiting table in the Pacific to return him so that his people might see him."[28] The paper finally got its wish when Miller returned hom on leave in December.[29]

Such sarcasm became increasingly vitriolic as the year progressed and the Courier realized that even the war emergency would not bring a quick end to most discrimination against black workers. Using terms that were in vogue because of the war, the paper described oppopents of black progress as "quislings," "Axis agents," and "saboteurs" and accused them of treason.[30] One of the most sarcastic pieces ran in late February:

> DEAR WHITE FOLKS:
>
> We colored folks wish to extend our gratitude to you, the most liberal race on earth. . . .
>
> We are a race that is avid to learn, and we quickly mastered the machinery of a locomotive as well as the machinery of statesmanship. But, white folks, you felt politics to be rather strenuous mentally,

so you ousted us colored folks out of office, and a locomotive is hot, nasty work, so you turned that field of labor over to your own men. . . .

In our separate schools, we do not have the intricate machinery your boys learn to handle, for it is treacherous, and we might injure our lovely brown fingers or weaken our laughing brown eyes. . . . And so, when WAR comes, we do not know how to man the tanks, the airplanes. the machine guns. . . and the enemy swoops upon us and you, who love the colored folks so dearly, go out to battle and fight for us.

While we stay in the comparative safety of mess quarters on the ship, you are up on deck dodging bullets from the enemy; while we are in the comparative safety (of) our own army camps, you are in the front lines dodging enemy tanks, or in the air eluding the bombs that rocket from his planes; and while we are safe at home during a blackout, you are on the turret, scanning the skies for danger.

Yes, white folks, you are generous and we colored folks are grateful. 31

The paper singled out two Southern governors, Georgia's Eugene Talmadge and Alabama's Frank Dixon, for vicious editorial attacks. In March, Talmadge criticized Atlanta's black teachers, who filed a suit to be paid the same salaries as white teachers. He said they did not deserve equal pay because they did not pay as much income tax as white teachers (he failed to mention that the whites' higher salaries were the reason for them paying more tax) and their cost of living was not as high as that of whites. The Courier said such statements "will doubtless be applauded" in Berlin, Rome and Toyko. A week later, Talmadge lashed out at the possibility of blacks being paid the same as whites at a Bell Bomber plant being built in Marietta, Ga. He claimed it would be a mistake to pay blacks equally because of "their low standard of living and their low average of intelligence." "This is a white man's war against the yellow man . . . and this war can be won without the Negroes' help," said Talmadge. "The Negro has never done anything to help develop America so why should he be given a chance to enjoy the fruits like the white man or be given an even break?" The Courier was outraged and

labeled him the "Fuehrer."[32] Dixon angered the paper in August by refusing a government defense contract for 1 3/4 million yards of cloth because it would have required non-discrimination in Alabama's mills. Dixon, claiming that segregation was necessary in the South, concluded: "I will not permit the employes of the state to be placed in the position where they must abandon the principles of segregation or lose their jobs." Schuyler retorted, "Hitler will hail Gauleiter Dixon."[33]

There was a subtle shift in the criticism as the year progressed. The amount never decreased but the target changed. In the first part of 1942, much of the criticism was directed at the federal government and the military, but state and municipal governments, along with private businesses, took the brunt of the criticism in the last half of the year.

Another shift was a patriotic tone which crept into the Courier in the spring and continued for the remainder of the year, becoming increasingly obvious. It appeared on April 11 with a photograph showing a black ex-janitor doing "a dance of joy" after being told he had passed his physical exam and had been accepted into the army. "He's ready Uncle Sam," the paper announced in words that would be repeated numerous times with slight variations.[34] The same theme was present on May 23 when the Courier ran a full page, with nine pictures, on black industrial workers:

> These black men (in the defense plants) realize that they have as much, or more, at stake than any other group of people. They know that democracy must survive. They know that democracy is their only hope. And, because they are conscious of these things, they have rolled up their sleeves and are enthusiastically helping in the development of America's might. "America first, last and always!" is their song as they work in the arsenals of democracy. 35

Along with the shift in the target of criticism and the increasing patriotic tone, the Courier noted more and more black accomplishments as the months passed. Seldom were these accomplishments nationally

important--such as when the Navy announced it would begin accepting blacks for other positions besides messboys on June 1--but the sum total was overwhelming evidence that blacks were on the move upward.

The following indicate the variety of accomplishments mentioned by the Courier: Hugh Mulzac named the first black captain of a Liberty ship; an 18-year-old black woman selected "Youth Worker Most Valuable for War Production" in the Des Moines area, which made her eligible to compete for the state title; a mixed black-white crew at Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corp. in Rankin, Pa., set a company record for the amount of pig iron turned out in a month; George Washington Carver announced that peanut hulls, previous believed to be useless, could be used as a fertilizer substitute for peat moss; black electricians at Tuskegee Air Base worked more than 1 million hours without an accident; a black-owned aircraft company produced the Wayne Glider, which experts called the best training glider in the United States; and black women hired as section hands for the first time on the Pennsylvania Railroad.[36]

Accompanying the stories on accomplishments were numerous statements by the Courier which emphasized that blacks were excellent workers. For example, one article talked about blacks making "crack" soldiers; another noted that black Army officers were "competent leaders;" and the story about the Tuskegee electricians said that "Uncle Sam has a great army of Yankee Doodle Tan helpers."[37]

Such praise particularly became pronounced in stories about black women workers. In the first half of 1942, little was written about them and almost all of it appeared on the women's pages.[38] But in the latter part of the year, with black women enrolling in defense training programs, getting industrial jobs and joining the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC),

there was a noticeable increase in the number of articles, and they appeared throughout the paper.

The praise was much the same as would appear more than 30 years later in newspaper and magazine articles when white women began pressing for an Equal Rights Amendment. An article about the WAACs arriving at Ft. Huachuca noted that "you can't call them the weaker sex. . . . They are showing how well they can do their jobs, as SOLDIERS AND NOT AS WOMEN."[39] Industrial workers received the same praise:

> Women, no longer the weaker sex, have abandoned frills and furbelows for the more practical work uniforms, slacks and coveralls. Manicures are no longer important and necessary. There's a job to be done, and it's the women who are getting in behind the wheels of industry and giving them a big push.
>
> No longer is the old saying, "Men must fight and women must weep," to be considered accurate and true. Our women are going to work, and they're doing hard work and proud of it. 40

The Courier's new attitude in the second half of the year was best summed up when a black woman was promoted by Western Union in August from a clerk's position to manager of a branch office. The paper said she "has proven that women executives can do the job as well as men."[41]

Unions and the black workers joining unions, also received considerable attention from the Courier. The paper continually echoed a theme which was first stated by columnist Horace Cayton on Jan. 31: "The only way the Negro is going to get a break from the entire organized labor movement is to get into every union that he can and fight within that union for full equality."[42] Thus, the paper was elated in May when the black United Transport Service Employees of America (more commonly known as the Red Caps) voted unanimously to affiliate with the CIO.[43] During the rest of the year, the Courier ran numerous stories about Willard S. Townsend, president of the Red Caps, and accorded him equal

prominence with A. Philip Randolph, president of the AFL's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. For example, both men wrote articles on the meaning of Labor Day and the paper used each story across eight columns on facing pages in large, bold face type.[44]

There was no question that the Courier favored the CIO. Not only did most of the unfavorable union stories deal with the AFL,[45] but when the paper conducted a poll in November on which union organization offered less to blacks, 72.6 percent of the respondents said the AFL. "The CIO has consistently welcomed the Negro into most of its locals and one finds him integrated actively into the affairs of that organization," said the Courier. "Appreciation and approval for this trend was expressed more and more as the poll progressed."[46] A month later, in another poll, the paper asked if labor caused more war problems for the nation than industry and big business and 55.1 percent chose labor. "The AFL received the lion's share of the criticism," noted the Courier, not only because of discrimination by its local unions at the Kaiser Shipyards in Portland, Ore., but because the AFL recently had voted down a resolution to create a committee to fight discrimination.[47] The CIO, however, had formed such a committee in August and had named Townsend as one of its members.[48]

In contrast to the amount written about unions and union members, few articles appeared on black agricultural workers. The stories generally fell into one of three categories: some noted how the Farm Security Administration was helping farmers;[49] others offered advice ("When people at Milston Farms do get sick, they go to the doctor right away. They know they won't be laid up so long if their ailments are doctored before they get real bad.");[50] and a few praised individual

farmers for forming co-ops or increasing harvest yields.[51] Bolden wrote one other type of article in May--he encouraged blacks to reverse a national trend by returning to farm labor (between 1940 and 1944, the percentage of black workers in agriculture declined from 35.1 percent to 23 percent):[52]

> Here is the opportunity for a large percentage of the colored population of this country to render yoeman service. . . . Now is the time to put away the tuxedo and cocktail glass for overalls, plow and trowel. Our future is before us and our . . . talents and opportunities should be exploited to the utmost. . . .
>
> With the Government eliminating the unfair sharecropper practices . . . we have every opportunity to make our stake in life. . . . We are in a position to take advantage of a situation that offers us our best opportunity. . . . We should take advantage of it because it is just like manna from heaven. So, let's . . . give the plow a whirl and build a future for ourselves and our country. 53

Bolden never heeded his own words, however. He remained at the Courier and was a war correspondent within six months.

* * * * *

My study shows that the overall articles in the paper about black workers coincided in one way with the Courier's Double V campaign, which basically emphasized non-discrimination toward workers. In all of the worker-related articles, as in the Double V stories, the criticism of the federal government occurred primarily in the first half of 1942 and then tapered off dramatically. While Bolden's explanation of "good faith intentions" by the government is plausible when asking solely why the Double V virtually ended in 1942, it appears simplistic to believe that it was the only reason for all of the various trends in worker-related articles in the Courier throughout the year. Therefore, it is necessary to look at other explanations.

When the United States entered World War II, government officials

began stressing the need of a united home front to ensure victory, and the Courier felt whites could no longer ignore the issue of employment discrimination. After all, since blacks made up about 10 percent of the country's population in 1942, it appeared that they might be the key between victory and defeat. Therefore, the Courier, which never passed up a rare opportunity when blacks had an advantage, attacked worker discrimination vigorously, particularly in the federal government, because it realized that was where the quickest and most sweeping gains might be made. But improvements for black workers evolved slowly and the Courier became bitter in disbelief and turned to sarcasm. The bitterness was never more evident that in May when Scott wrote: "It is all too apparent that there seems to exist an unspoken, but nevertheless crystallized, feeling on the part of many that they would rather lose this conflict than work with men of darker hue."[54] However, still willing to take any small gains it could claw out of white America, the Courier continued to encourage blacks to join unions, run numerous articles on job openings and tell blacks how to act and dress if they got a job.

The Courier's criticism of the federal government was viewed as possibly seditious by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's zealous director, J. Edgar Hoover, who had distrusted the black press for over 20 years.[55] He initiated a large-scale investigation of black newspapers, including the Courier,[56] and Bolden recalls that the investigation was not a secret. He said the agents came to the paper in 1942 and everyone considered them "scared white men, Hoover's flunkies." "They'd tell us to shut our mouths, you're hurting the war effort, and we'd just laugh at them," he said.[57] Bolden and the others may have laughed, but there was no question that the Courier was concerned about being taken

to court and suppressed in the first half of 1942. A typical editorial appeared in the Courier in May:

> A "Sixth Columnist" is supposed to be one who says or write anything that agrees with what Axis propaganda has said or which may cause disunity, with government officials deciding the question to their satisfaction.
>
> Of course this sort of thing can lead to the complete suppression of all critical comment since it permits of only one point of view. 58

Those most apprehensive about the FBI's investigation almost certainly were the black newspaper publishers, a generally conservative group that would lose the most financially if the papers were suppressed. They realized that an outspoken press was advantageous, and desired, by blacks, but they also knew that there were limits to what the government would allow in wartime. Therefore, black publishers, including the Courier's, sought a compromise position from which they could continue to fight discrimination while allaying government fears about sedition.

There undoubtedly were other factors in the Courier's shift in tone in 1942. One of them was the country's war fortunes, which improved dramatically during the year as the U.S. went onto the offensive militarily. This began with important naval victories in the Coral Sea and at Midway in May and June respectively, continued with the landing at Guadacanal in August and concluded that year with the Allied invasion of North Africa in November. No black publisher would have wanted to be known as not supporting the winning side.

In addition, blacks unquestionably were impressed with the determination of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) to break down discrimination. The victories were small in 1942, but the fact that the government was trying was noted in innumerable Courier articles, such as one which had the headline: "FEPC Chalks Up Brilliant Record

During Year." The writer noted that the committee had cited 30 companies in its first year of operation and predicted that "Executive Order 8802 (which established the FEPC) may in time . . . be classed along side the Emancipation Proclamation."[59] Although that was an exaggeration, the FEPC still was an outstanding example of the government's "good faith intentions," which Bolden mentioned.

Therefore, probably for a combination of reasons, the Courier switched the target of its criticism in the latter part of 1942 from the federal government and military to state and municipal governments and private businesses.[60] This allowed the paper to keep readers happy, since the number of worker-related articles did not decline, while appeasing anxious government officials. At the same time, and also as an act of appeasement, a patriotic tone crept into the paper with numerous assurances that blacks were ready to fight for Uncle Sam.

The new tone also served another purpose--it was an attempt to improve black morale. Everyone agreed it was bad in 1942, and the government's Office of Facts and Figures became so concerned that it called a special meeting of black editors in Washington, D.C., in March to discuss the problem. "It is amusing to see these people (government officials) so panicky over a situation which they have caused and which governmental policies maintain," said the Courier. "If the Washington gentry are eager to see Negro morale take an upturn, they have only to abolish jim crowism and lower the color bar in every field and phase of American life."[61] The paper never retreated from its belief that the government, and not the press, was to blame for bad black morale. However, the Courier was concerned and Finkle points out that it continually attempted to improve morale.[62] An obvious example were the

numerous stories about black accomplishments, which proved that some workers were succeeding despite discriminatory barriers.

Two other trends in the Courier in 1942--what was written about black women and black agricultural workers--are worth noting. The prominence that black women workers assumed in the paper as the year progressed was not surprising. From the paper's earliest days, publisher Robert L. Vann established a tradition of changing positions quickly to seize new opportunities. He died in 1940, but his wife took over the paper and continued to operate it in the same manner.[63] Obviously, the Courier felt that placing greater emphasis on women workers would sell more newspapers, and its circulation rose impressively in 1942. It's unlikely, however, that the new emphasis on women workers was based solely on circulation. Even a cursory reading of the paper indicates that it eagerly played up any black gains in 1942, no matter how small, and it would have been quite willing to bury the myth of male dominance, at least temporarily, if this furthered the black cause.

As for black agricultural workers, the Courier probably ignored them simply because it felt the future of blacks was not in agriculture but in industry. Furthermore, these type of stories would have boosted circulation very little. This latter reason cannot be overstated--the Courier was the country's dominant black newspaper in 1942 but it continually sought to ride the circulation surge to even greater prominence.

Overall, the Courier's coverage of black workers in 1942 was designed quite simply to help blacks advance by using whatever journalistic means worked--praise, criticism and sarcasm, or fatherly

advice. There was no question that the paper viewed 1942 as a pivotal point for black workers. Bibb said it best in October: "When the war ends the colored American will be better off financially, spiritually and economically. War may be hell for some, but it bids fair to open up the portals of heaven for us."[64]

NOTES

(All citations from the Pittsburgh Courier are in its national edition)

[1]"Backward Glance--Forward Look," Pittsburgh Courier, Dec. 26, 1942. The correct name of the Committee was the Fair Employment Practice Committee, but sometimes, as in this instance, an "s" was added to Practice. Either some of the paper's writers did not know the correct title or a typesetter made the error and the copy desk did not catch it.

[2]Robert C. Weaver, Negro Labor: A National Problem (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), 78.

[3]See Lee Finkle, Forum for Protest (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses Inc., 1975), 53-54; and Arnold M. Rose, The Negro's Morale (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 104-105.

[4]Richard M. Dalfiume, "The Forgotten Years of the Negro Revolution," Journal of American History, 55 (June 1968), 91-92, 95.

[5]Frank E. Bolden, telephone conversations on Oct. 31, 1980, and Nov. 21, 1980.

[6]First Report: Fair Employment Practice Committee (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, May 1, 1945), 65, 85, 90-91, 142.

[7]Neil A. Wynn, The Afro-American and the Second World War (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 55. Weaver, in Negro Labor: A National Problem, also notes on page 79-80 that blacks made most of their gains during the war after 1942.

[8]See Mabel M. Smythe, ed., The Black American Reference Book (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 895; Dennis D. Nelson, The Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy (New York:

Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), 12; and Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents, Vol. VI (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977), 317.

[9]Ulysses Lee, United States Army in World War II: Special Studies: The Employment of Negro Troops, Vol. 8, No. 8 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 416.

[10]Emmett J. Scott, Negro Migration During the War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), 29-30. Also see Frederick G. Detweiler, The Negro Press in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 72-76; Rose, The Negro's Morale, 38; and Finkle, Forum for Protest, 45-46.

[11]See the following stories in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Ted Poston Gets Industries to Put Negro Women to Work; Wants Them to Seek Jobs Now," March 7, 1942; "Doctors to Staff Huachuca Hospital," March 21, 1942; "Shipbuilding Jobs Open to Race Men," March 28, 1942; "Nursing Recruits Sought by New York Groups," Nov. 14, 1942; and "Harvesting Jobs Open," Dec. 19, 1942.

[12]"Jobs Open . . . But No Takers," Pittsburgh Courier, Aug. 8, 1942.

[13]"Pa. Shipbuilder to Expand Negro Work Opportunities," Pittsburgh Courier, May 9, 1942.

[14]Randy Dixon, "$21,000,000 Payroll for Race Shipyard Workers," Pittsburgh Courier, June 6, 1942. The annual payroll figure, which was given out by the company, probably was an exaggeration. It would have meant that the average worker would receive $2,333 a year, but according to government statistics, the average black worker in the United States did not receive this much annual pay until 1953. There is no evidence, however, the Courier ever questioned the company's figure. For a

chart on average annual salaries, which shows that black workers' pay rose from $89 in 1939 to $1,448 in 1947 (without giving any figures for intervening years), see Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 303.

[15]Scott, who remained in the job at Sun Shipbuilding until 1945, had been in the black limelight since the end of the 19th century. After working as a reporter on the white Houston Post and then editor of the black Texas Freeman (also in Houston), he became Booker T. Washington's private secretary in 1897. He remained with Washington until his death in 1915, during which time he helped start the National Negro Business League in 1900, and then he stayed on at Tuskegee Institute as the college's secretary, a position he had held since 1912. After serving from 1917 to 1919 as special assistant to the Secretary of War, he joined Howard University as secretary-treasurer and business manager. He was reduced to secretary in 1933, after clashing with Howard president Mordecai Johnson, and retired in 1938 at age 65. He also was on the public relations staff of every Republican national convention from 1928 to 1948 and assistant publicity director of the Republican National Committee from 1939 to 1942. For more information on Scott, see John A. Garraty, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Six, 1956-1960 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 567-568.

[16]For articles noting the opposition to the Sun project, see the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Spooks Sought in Sun Shipyard Plant," June 13, 1942; "NAACP Raps Shipbuilding Plan," June 13, 1942; and Bert Cumby, "Three Pressure Groups Seek to Control the Destinies

of the Negro in American," Aug. 1, 1942.

[17]George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," Pittsburgh Courier, July 4, 1942. Schuyler's prominence on the paper in 1942 was shown by the fact that he was the only columnist run regularly on the front page. He also wrote a second column, which appeared on the editorial page. A former staff member of the controversial black magazine The Messenger, he became a columnist on the Courier in 1924. He also served as business manager of The Crisis, the NAACP magazine, from 1937 to 1944. For more information on Schuyler, see Virgil A. Clift and W. Augustus Low, eds., Encyclopedia of Black America (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1981), 743.

[18]J.H. Jenkins, "Was Pegler Right?" Pittsburgh Courier, July 25, 1942. Jenkins may have been right. The circulation of large black newspapers grew rapidly in 1942, and the Sun project stories, certainly of interest to many readers, had the potential to increase the Courier's circulation.

[19]Cumby, "Three Pressure Groups." Also see "Sun Jobs Attract High School, College Men," Pittsburgh Courier, July 4, 1942.

[20]Joseph D. Bibb, "Grim Facts," Pittsburgh Courier, Jan. 10, 1942. Bibb had the background to impress blacks when he wrote about how they could rise through hard work. He attended Atlanta University, Livingstone College and Howard University before graduating in 1918 from the Yale University Law School. He immediately joined the militant Chicago Whip as an editor, a position he still held in 1942 while writing columns for the Pittsburgh Courier. For more information on Bibb, see Thomas Yenser, ed., Who's Who in Colored America, 1941-44 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Thomas Yenser, 1944), 53.

[21]Joseph D. Bibb, "Filth and Crime," Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 14, 1942. For other stories with a similar theme, see the following in the Courier: George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," Feb. 14, 1942; George S. Schuyler, "The World Today," July 4, 1942; Joseph D. Bibb, "Public Conduct," Dec. 12, 1942; and "A Word on Deportment," Dec. 26, 1942. Finkle, in Forum for Protest (p. 20) notes that advocating "good manners" did not begin with the Chicago Defender in World War I. These types of articles initially appeared in the nation's first black newspaper, Freedom's Journal, in 1827-28.

[22]Edgar R. Rouzeau, "'Need Proper Racial Strategy for These Critical Times to Save Gains'--Rouzeau," Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 14, 1942. For other stories with a similar theme, see the following in the Courier: Lucia M. Pitts, "Jobholders Have Chance to Break Down Prejudice," Jan. 31, 1942; and Edgar T. Rouzeau, "'Negro Army Officers Have Double Duty in Present Conflict'--Rouzeau," May 2, 1942.

[23]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: George S. Schuyler, "The World Today," Feb. 21, 1942; "Tractor Plant Bars Negroes," Feb. 7, 1942; "Charge Aluminum Plants Bar Race Skilled Workers," April 11, 1942; "Red Cross Hires Only White Social Workers," June 13, 1942; "Help Wanted--Whites Only," June 27, 1942; "Race Officers Unwanted in U.S. Merchant Marine," Sept. 5, 1942; and "Resolution to Hire Negro Beer Driver-Helpers Killed," Sept. 5, 1942.

[24]"Something Amuck in Henderson, Tex.," Pittsburgh Courier, Nov. 17, 1942.

[25]"A Hero from the Galley," Pittsburgh Courier, Jan. 3, 1942.

[26]"Navy Cross for Dorie Miller," Pittsburgh Courier, May 16, 1942.

[27]George S. Schuyler, "The World Today," Pittsburgh Courier,

May 23, 1942.

[28]"This Is An Example of How the Jim-Crow Policy And the Jim-Crow Attitude Work," Pittsburgh Courier, July 25, 1942.

[29]"A Hero Returns . . A Medal He Wears," Pittsburgh Courier, Dec. 19, 1942.

[30]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: Emmett J. Scott, "Saboteurs of Morale Jeopardize Unity by Fomenting Racial Hate," Jan. 24, 1942; Horace R. Cayton, "NMU Action," Jan. 31, 1942; "Sheldon Endorses Courier 'Double V,'" March 7, 1942; "'American Quislings Hinder War Effort,' Says Lester Granger," April 11, 1942; Frank E. Bolden, "'End Discrimination Now,' Bolden," April 11, 1942; "Walter White Charges South with Rebellion," Aug. 22, 1942; and A. Philip Randolph, "The Negro and Labor Day," Sept. 5, 1942.

[31]Paul Keyes Lewis, "An Open Letter to White Americans," Pittsburgh Courier, Feb. 28, 1942.

[32]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "'Negro Teachers Not Entitled to Same Pay as Whites,' Raves George Governor Talmadge," March 14, 1942; "Another Country Heard From," March 14, 1942; and "'No Equal Pay for Negro Workers'--Talmadge," March 21, 1942.

[33]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Segregation on Trial," Aug. 1, 1942; George S. Schuyler, "The World Today," Aug. 1, 1942; and Marjorie McKenzie, "Pursuit of Democracy," Aug. 1, 1942.

[34]"He's Ready Uncle Sam," Pittsburgh Courier, April 11, 1942. Also see the following in the Courier: "Cleveland Beauties Studying at Wilberforce," May 30, 1942; and picture page, June 20, 1942.

[35]"Producing America's Might," Pittsburgh Courier, May 23, 1942.

[36]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Race Captain for

'Booker T. Washington,'" Sept. 26, 1942; "Race Girl Is Valuable War Worker," Feb. 28, 1942; "Cracked Records in 'Speed-Up' Drive," April 18, 1942; "Dr. Carver Discovers New Use for Peanuts," May 30, 1942; "Electrical Wizards at Tuskegee Air Base Help to 'Keep the 99th Flying,'" Aug. 22, 1942; "Authorities Pronounce Race Made Aircraft One of Best," Dec. 19, 1942; and "'Pennsy' Hires Negro Women Section Hands," Dec. 5, 1942.

[37]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Brown Fighting Men Man Strategic Caribbean Outposts and Prepare to Meet the Axis," Aug. 29, 1942; "Three More Officers for Uncle Sam," July 25, 1942; and "Electrical Wizards at Tuskegee Air Base Help to 'Keep the 99th Flying,'" Aug. 22, 1942. The words "Yankee Doodle Tan" in the latter article were especially meaningful to the Courier's readers--that was the title of a Double V song.

[38]The only group of women workers who were written about throughout the year, with many of the stories appearing on the front page, were blacks working as teachers below the college level. Most of the stories were about them filing pay equalization suits.

[39]"WAACs Set Pace as Model Soldiers," Pittsburgh Courier, Dec. 19, 1942.

[40]Billy Rowe, "Women Will Help Win This War!" Pittsburgh Courier, Sept. 26, 1942.

[41]"Manager of W.U. Branch Office," Pittsburgh Courier, Aug. 22, 1942.

[42]Horace R. Cayton, "NMU Action," Pittsburgh Courier, Jan. 31, 1942. Cayton, who was the paper's main labor writer in 1942, was another of the Courier's well-known columnists. A 1931 graduate of the University of Washington, he was a special assistant to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1934-35 and then he taught at Fisk University in his first of a number of academic appointments. In 1935, he co-authored Black

Workers and the New Unions with George S. Mitchell. For more information on Cayton, see Clift and Low, eds., Encyclopedia of Black America.

[43]Horace R. Cayton, "UTSEA Plans Campaign on Rail Workers; USWA Raps Poll Tax," Pittsburgh Courier, May 30, 1942.

[44]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: A. Philip Randolph, "The Negro and Labor Day," Sept. 5, 1942; and Willard S. Townsend, "This Labor Day . . . 1942," Sept. 5, 1942.

[45]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "AFL Painters Continue Ban on Race Labor," Jan. 24, 1942; "Reaping the Whirlwind," April 11, 1942; "Asks Investigation into AFL Prejedice," July 18, 1942; "AFL Union Continues to Ban Race Workers," Aug. 8, 1942; and "Machinists' Union Blocks Race Labor," Sept. 26, 1942.

[46]"Negroes Favor CIO," Pittsburgh Courier, Nov. 14, 1942.

[47]"Labor Censured on Weak Anti-Bias Fight," Pittsburgh Courier, Dec. 12, 1942.

[48]"Townsend Named by Murray to Prove 'Closed Door' Policy," Pittsburgh Courier, Aug. 29, 1942.

[49]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "F.S.A. Will Aid Farm Workers with 9 Camps," May 9, 1942; and "Megratory Farm Workers Live in Sanitary Camps," Oct. 24, 1942.

[50]"FSA Group Health Plan Aid to Negro Farmers," Pittsburgh Courier, April 11, 1942. Also see in the Courier: "To Recruit Youths for Farm Work," June 6, 1942.

[51]See the following in the Pittsburgh Courier: "Negro Farmers Buy Machinery Co-Operatively; Aid War Effort," April 18, 1942; "Negro Farmers All-Out in Food for War Drive," June 6, 1942; "Farmers Save Tires by Hauling Co-Operatively," Aug. 15, 1942; and "Widow Enlists Farm on War

Food Front," Dec. 12, 1942.

[52]Seymour L. Wolfbein, "Postwar Trends in Negro Employment," Monthly Labor Review, 65 (December 1947), 664.

[53]Frank E. Bolden, "Bolden Cites New Opportunities for Negro Farmers in War Effort," Pittsburgh Courier, May 2, 1942.

[54]Emmett J. Scott, "'We Must Win the War Together'--Scott," Pittsburgh Courier, May 23, 1942.

[55]In 1919, Hoover was named head of the Department of Justice's newly-created General Intelligence Division, which investigated radicals. In a short time, he became convinced that blacks were an easy target for communists and black publications were especially dangerous because of the ease with which they spread propaganda. That was still his attitude in World War II. For information on how Hoover developed his ideas about the black press, see the following: Max Lowenthal, The Federal Bureau of Investigation (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1950), 120-129; and Hank Messick, John Edgar Hoover (New York: David McKay Inc., 1972), 13-14.

[56]Little is known about the investigation. One document in which it appears is the FBI's "Survey of Racial Conditions in the United States," which was made between 1941 and 1943. Seven black newspapers, including the Courier, were investigated because "they have reportedly acted or have exhibited sentiments in a manner inimical to the Nation's war effort." The undated survey is at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (OF 10B) in Hyde Park, N.Y.

[57]Bolden, interviews, Oct. 31, 1980, and Jan. 14, 1983.

[58]"Is Criticism to Be Suppressed?" Pittsburgh Courier, May 16, 1942. For other articles mentioning possible suppression of the black press, see the following in the Courier: Marjorie McKenzie, "Pursuit of

Democracy," May 9, 1942; Horace R. Cayton, "Peglerism," May 9, 1942; George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," May 23, 1942; Edgar T. Rouzeau, "Pegler's Challenge Shows Need for Victory on Home Front'--Rouzeau," May 16, 1942; and J.A. Rogers, "Rogers Says:," May 16, 1942.

[59]E.W. Baker, "FEPC Chalks Up Brilliant Record During Year," Pittsburgh Courier, July 4, 1942.

[60]White newspapers have always faced a dilemma when being critical of private businesses because of a threat of lost advertising, but the Courier in 1942 had no such problem. Not one of the companies that the paper attacked that year for discrimination against black workers advertised in it. Furthermore, the white-owned companies that did advertise (almost all of the ads came from Old Gold, Philip Morris, Esso, Pepsi-Cola, Chesterfield and Pabst Blue Ribbon) placed less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the Courier's advertising in 1942.

[61]"Hysteria Over Negroes," Pittsburgh Courier, May 2, 1945.

[62]Finkle, Forum for Protest, 115-117.

[63]Andrew Buni, Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 13, 325.

[64]Joseph D. Bibb, "We Gain by War," Pittsburgh Courier, Oct. 10, 1942.